



# ABRAHAMS CREEK WATERSHED ASSOCIATION

Everyone Lives Down Stream  
Fall Newsletter 2009

## Keep Drugs Out of the Water Supply



Doctors, pharmacists, and, until recently, even the federal government long advised patients to flush unused pharmaceuticals down the toilet. Then trace amounts of drugs began showing up in the nation's water supply. In 2002, the U.S. Geological Survey announced that tests of 139 streams in 30 states showed trace amounts of common pharmaceuticals like Prozac, codeine, antibiotics, and drugs for high blood pressure and diabetes.

While the human health effects of many of these materials are not yet well known, the harmful environmental effects of Endocrine Disrupting Compounds (EDCs) are well documented. It is known that extremely low levels of EDCs can interfere with the normal function of the endocrine systems of living organisms, especially the reproductive systems. Wastewater treatment plants are not designed to effectively treat all EDCs and EPA and many others are investigating the effects of EDCs on humans. To reduce the EDCs in our waterways the federal government recommends mixing the drugs with an "undesirable substance" like coffee grounds or kitty litter, entombing them in sealed containers, and throwing them in the trash

## How Urbanized Areas Affect Water Quality



The porous and varied terrain of natural landscapes like forests, wetlands, and grasslands, traps rainwater and snow melt and allows them to filter slowly into the ground. In contrast, im-

pervious (nonporous) surfaces like roads, parking lots, and rooftops prevent rain and snow melt from infiltrating, or soaking, into the ground. Most of the rainfall

and snow melt remains above the surface, where it runs off rapidly in unnaturally large amounts. Storm sewer systems concentrate runoff into smooth, straight conduits. This runoff gathers speed and erosional power as it travels underground. When this runoff leaves the storm drains and empties into a stream, its excessive volume and power blast out stream banks, damaging stream side vegetation and wiping out aquatic habitat. They often carry higher water temperatures from streets, roof tops, and parking lots, which are harmful to the health and reproduction of aquatic life.

## Abraham's Creek Watershed Assessment

Through years of ecological neglect, the challenges facing the watershed are as diverse as the watershed itself. Chief among the watershed concerns is non-point source pollution. Significant stream bank erosion has caused excessive sedimentation. Oil, grease and toxic chemicals from urban runoff have resulted in poor water quality. In addition, undesirable stream bank vegetation from invasive Japanese Knotweed has caused further stream bank destabilization. The association is also looking to the future with concern for the impact of urban sprawl on the undeveloped portion of the watershed.

The Abraham's Creek Watershed Assessment funded by a Growing Greener DEP grant will be started this fall. Members of the Abrahams Creek Watershed Association understand the challenges facing our watershed and are striving to develop a comprehensive watershed management plan. The assessment will provide a technically sound foundation for addressing storm water issues, land development, stream bank erosion, and the improvement and further protection of water quality.

**Remember, Everybody Lives Down Stream**

Visit our web site

[www.abrahamscreek.org](http://www.abrahamscreek.org)

*This newsletter has been funded by the League of Women Voters of Pennsylvania Citizens Education Fund through Section 319 Clean Water Act grant from Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection.*